

REMARKS

In an Office Action mailed on February 7, 2007, claims 1-5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 22 and 97-100 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Inaba.

As amended, the apparatus of independent claim 1 includes a body, which includes a first surface. A sleeve of the apparatus is adapted to be moved from a retracted position to an extended position. The sleeve includes a second surface. A sealing element of the apparatus forms a sealing contact with the first surface of the body and with the second surface of the sleeve when the sleeve is in the extended position.

Contrary to the arrangement that is now set forth in claim 1, Inaba discloses a threading member 22 that engages a thread to couple two coaxial pipes together. *See, for example*, Inaba, 5:13-20. Inaba also discloses annular projections 9 and 19 for purposes of forming seals between the two joined pipes. As depicted in Figs. 1 and 2 of Inaba, the annular projections 9 and 19 are formed on the end surfaces of the joined pipes. *See, for example*, Inaba, 5:34-43. Inaba does not, however, teach or even suggest a sealing element that contacts a surface of the threading member 22 and a surface of a body that receives pipes for purposes of forming a seal connection between these two components. Therefore, for at least this reason, Inaba fails to anticipate amended independent claim 1.

Regarding the § 102 rejection of claim 97, as amended, the connector assembly of claim 97 includes a sealing element to form a sealing contact with a first surface of a second body and a second surface of a sleeve when the sleeve is in the extended position. For at least the same reasons that are set forth above for claim 1, Inaba fails to teach amended independent claim 97. In this regard, Inaba fails to teach or even suggest a seal that forms a sealing contact with a surface of the threading member 22 and with a surface of the body that receives pipes.

Therefore, for at least this reason, amended independent claim 97 overcomes the § 102 rejection.

For similar reasons, the method of amended independent claim 101 overcomes the § 102 rejection in view of Inaba. In this regard, the method of claim 101 now recites forming a sealed connection between a surface of a sleeve and a surface of a body when the sleeve is in an extended position, an act that is not taught by Inaba.

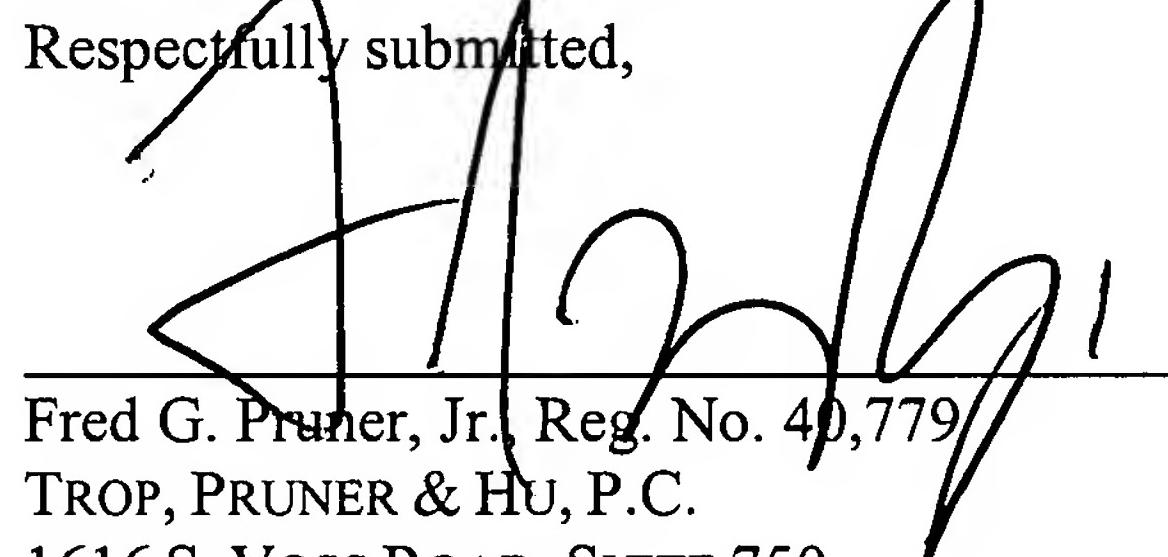
Claims 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 16, 18, 22, 98-100, 102, 103 and 105 are patentable for at least the reason that these claims depend from allowable claims.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the § 102 rejections and a favorable action in the form of a Notice of Allowance. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 20-1504 (SHL.0238US).

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Respectfully submitted,



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